(b) the number of matters and issues relating to the Government of Andhra Pradesh pending with Government and the time since these cases are pending;

(c) the reasons for the delay, if any, in the final disposal of these cases; and

(d) by when all pending issues are likely to be sorted out?

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In addition, about 80% of the Ninth Plan Budgetary Provision of Rs. 2450 crores of the North Eastern Council (NEC) has been allocated for development of infrastructure like Water, Power Transport and Communications in the North Eastern Region.

(b) It is a fact that some Ministries/Departments have expressed their inability to earmark 10% of their budgetary provisions for the North East and Sikkim owing to the very nature and scope of their schemes/programmes.

(c) For accelerating the pace of development in the North Eastern Region, apart from higher Plan allocations, funding by NEC, provision by Central Ministries and Departments, and assistance out of Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources, efforts are being made to mobilize additional resources by involving National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC). The per capita Plan allocation for the North Eastern States is much higher than national average.

Pending Issues relating to Andhra Pradesh

2438. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in The Hindu, dated the 25th November, 1999 under the caption "AP concerned over Centre's indifference";

MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The issues specifically mentioned in the news-item in "The Hindu" dated 25th November, 1999 relate to (i) relief for drought and cyclone affected areas, and (ii) raising the custom duty on imported sugar to protect the interest of farmers and domestic industry.

With regard to (i), the State Government of Andhra Pradesh has submitted two Memoranda seeking assistance from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR). The Memorandum in the wake of drought conditions was received on 29.9.1999 seeking assistance of Rs.720.36 crore. The second Memorandum in the wake of October cyclone was received on 22.10.1999 for an assistance of Rs.40.00 crore. The National Calamity Relief Committee decided on 14.12.1999 to release an assistance of Rs.75.36 crore from NFCR. The Memorandum for cyclone relief is under consideration in accordance with the procedure laid down for the purpose.

Regarding (ii) above, customs duty on various commodities including sugar are adjusted from time to time depending on demand and supply situations. Government imposed 5% custom duty on import of sugar and countervailing duty of Rs. 850/- per tonne. This was raised from 5 per cent to 20 per cent on 14.1.1999 and further to 25 per cent in the budget for 1999-2000. In addition, with effect from 28.2.1999 it attracts a surcharge of 10 per cent (of basic duty) as well. Thus the present rate of duty applicable to sugar is 27.5 per cent along with continuance of countervailing duty of Rs. 850/- equivalent to excise duty leviable on domestic sugar.

Growth rate in Agricultural Sector

2439. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the average growth rate of agricultural sector for the ninth five year plan has been projected at 4.5 per cent; and

(b) if so, how Government propose to achieve the target?